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Khrushchev, Nik. K.
Penkovsky, Oleg

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A Request to Interview Mr. Khrushchev

An open letter to the Kremlin:

There is absolutely nothing you can do to prevent the Khrushchev memoirs from becoming the publishing sensation of the decade, quite regardless of whether they are genuine or a fake. The more denials are issued from Moscow, the more publicity you will build up for the book and its serialization in the press. And if you threaten to throw out of Moscow the correspondents of the papers which intend to serialize the book -- as you threw some out over the publication of the "Penkovsky Papers" -- you will only alienate much of western opinion.

It is obvious from the concern you have displayed that you too regard the publication of the Khrushchev "Memoirs" as a most important matter. But, if you accept that there is nothing you can do to prevent publication or significantly reduce its extent, you can still accomplish a great deal if it could be firmly established in the public mind that it is, as the Khrushchev denial describes it, "a fabrication."

It has already been said, however, that the Khrushchev denial settles nothing, because it might have been forced

from him. It has also been argued, as is so often the case with denials, that the words he had used fall short of a complete repudiation of the material said to have come from him. There is only one way to establish the truth of this -- to make Khrushchev available for questioning at a press conference. If his state of health prevents this, then he should be made available for an interview. If the interview is given to a Soviet journalist, the result would be greeted in the West with the same skepticism as Khrushchev's earlier denial. He should therefore be interviewed by a western journalist, and one known for his critical attitude to the Soviet Union, one who could not be lightly accused by the publishers of the memoirs of having fallen for "Kremlin propaganda."

Obviously, an interview of this kind would be a considerable journalistic coup. If I were the journalist interviewing Mr. Khrushchev, what I would be after would be the truth. This indeed is one of the reasons why I have long specialized in the study of forgeries used in East-West psychological warfare. Far too many of these have been planted in the world press. Your own psychological warfare departments have

been as active as those of some western countries. Over the years, my personal concern in this has been to preserve the integrity of the press, to show both to newspaper readers and to newspaper writers that they are constantly being got at by psychological warriors who do not shrink from the use of forgery.

Although my own writing has often been described in the Soviet press as hostile, I have spent much time nailing down anti-Communist forgeries. Many of these, as in the early days of the Sino-Soviet dispute, were designed to exploit and to deepen the disarray in the world Communist movement. Your own propaganda agencies were often able to use my articles to show up such forgeries for what they were, where their own word would not have been accepted. As recently as last year, a western intelligence operation succeeded, by the use of forged documents, in causing a diplomatic rift between the Ivory Coast and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Novosti press agency used my study of this incident to show that the document which it was accused of circulating -- which caused all the trouble -- had in fact been a forgery.

But perhaps the most nota-

ble case concerned the "Penkovsky Papers" in 1965. On that occasion I produced a detailed analysis which showed that the memoirs attributed to Oleg Penkovsky, the top western spy executed a few years before that in the Soviet Union, could not have been wholly authentic. I also traced the parentage of the "Penkovsky Papers" to the CIA. The East-West propaganda battle which raged around the papers at the time ensured, of course, that the book became a best-seller. The diplomatic protests by Soviet ambassadors in the West, the scathing articles in the Soviet press, the outraged denials of the book's authenticity, only served to arouse greater public interest in it.

There is only one good way to fight lies -- with truth. If the Khrushchev book is a fake, there are a number of ways in which the truth can be made to prevail, as I indicated in the message which I sent to the foreign ministry's press department in Moscow. However far apart you and I may be politically, we could work together in this matter to establish the truth because we have a common interest in it -- provided, of course, that it is the truth that you are concerned about.

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Sec. 4.01.2 Penkovsky Papers
✓ - Khrushchev Memoirs

CIA-USSR